

RecRAC/RAC Meeting Minutes  
February 21-22, 2013  
Bureau of Land Management  
Monument Conference Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
440 West 200 South  
Salt Lake City, UT

**RAC Members in Attendance**

Carl Albrecht- Energy/Minerals  
Rick Ellis- WH&B  
Frank White - OHV  
JR Nelson- Elected Officials  
Steve Burr- Dispersed recreation  
Bill Hopkin- State  
Steve Slater- Environmental  
Brian Merrill- Commercial recreation  
Porter Teegarden- Dispersed recreation  
Bryan Harris- Energy/Minerals  
Ted Zimmerman- Public-at-large  
Lowell Braxton- Energy/Minerals  
LuAnn Adams- Elected Officials  
John Harja- State

**BLM Employees in Attendance**

Juan Palma (State Director), Sherry Foot (facilitator), Jeanette Matovich (Minute-taker)

**Public**

Ray Bloxham- SUWA; Jim Catlin – Wild Utah Project; Brian Maffly – SL Tribune Reporter

**February 21**

Sherry welcomed the RAC members and guests. RAC member introductions. This is the first face-to-face meeting of the new RAC year.

**What's Happening in Utah**

Juan Palma

Current events within BLM Utah

**Transmission Lines:** Mona to Oquirrh, Sigurd to Red Butte, Transwest Express, and Energy Gateway South

**Critical Utah BLM Vacancies:** Canyon Country District Manager; Moab, Monticello and Salt Lake City Field Office Managers

**Social Media:** We are working toward getting more exposure through social media venues such as Facebook, Twitter, and others.

**Range Program:** Focus on permit renewal, long range planning, and inventory and monitoring.

**Litigation:** This workload continues to be heavy for Utah BLM.

**RS-2477:** We continue to work with current litigation, Title V requests, and other opportunities to solve these issues.

**Law Enforcement:** We continue to provide quality service to our publics

### **Sage Grouse**

Quincy Bahr

Update on alternatives for regional planning (2015); Interim guidance for Utah and the State's position

Quincy- Project Manager for BLM UT sub-region Sage Grouse (SG) EIS for plan amendments. Ask for copy of .ppt. Greater- not Gunnison- SG.

Habitat fragmentation and long-term protection. Working w/FWS.

Ch. 1 90% completed- acres and issues

Ch. 2 Currently finalizing. Focus on flexibility in draft- ROD

Ch. 3 Contractor is working on this. BLM does GIS work in house.

Ch. 4 Started Feb. 7. Contractor started writing.

Tribal consultation- important to maintain contact.

Planning side- amending 13 LUPs in Utah. Involves every FO except the Monticello and St. George FOs because they don't have SG habitat. 6 plans from FS are included. 19 plans total.

SG habitats cover 25 out of 29 counties. Broad distribution throughout the state. BLM addresses about 46% of SG surface.

Goal is to develop as broad a range as possible to maintain flexibility. Keep all possibilities available.

Five draft alternatives are complete.

Alt A- No Action. 19 LUPs as they are. Problem to address inconsistent mgmt.

Alt B- IM 2012-044, National Technical Team (NTT) Report. Collections of specs that ID- some mgmt. considerations in range of alternatives.

Alt C- input during the scoping period. NTT good starting point, but additional mgmt. actions needed. This has been split into (2) alternatives. C-1 closed to livestock grazing. C-2 restrictions to livestock grazing.

Alt D- Sub-regional ID team recommends. Helped fill gaps from other ranges of alternatives.

Alt. E- split according to geography. E-1- Governors working group recommends. E-2 planning area expands into WY and FS executive orders.

Q- why were numbers of SG so high in the 50-80's? Concept of cover, invasion and predator control.

Q-proper grazing good for SG? Grazing was ID as a range-wide threat in 2010 report, but problems were localized.

Alt C- consideration driven by FWS' reaction to lawsuits.

Bill Hopkin shared a graph showing how AUMs decreased since 1940.

Does USFWS have final say? Need to have evaluations complete by 2015 because the 19 LUPs will be completed by 2015.

FWS has the say on what species get listed, but BLM decides how to amend the plans.

Juan- BLM doesn't have final say on whether SG gets listed, needs to find a balance. Would be disastrous if SG was listed. Would affect how BLM manages land in UT. We will have a draft EIS available sometime this summer. Will keep cooperators engaged and involved. Counties and others stay involved. Can pick the pieces from all alternatives that work for UT and put together one alternative at the end of 2014.

John Harja- State plan will be available in next 2 wks. Science/practicality dealing with private property in addition to public lands. Bigger than BLM. Some areas are appropriate. For conservation, some are not.

Dispute over why SG has been in decline. Habitat fragmentation and regulatory mechanisms are primary as identified by FWS. High levels in the '40-'80's may have been an aberration.

#### **National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS)**

Bunny Sterin/Aaron Curtis

Draft strategic plan for Utah public lands within the BLM's NLCS

Bunny handed out copies of the .ppt and 3-yr Strategy for reference.

1/3 recreational activities on BLM are on NLCS units.

National Monuments, Wilderness, Trails, etc., through legislation and must be designated by the President or Congress. ACECs are not included in the NLCS.

Ft. Ord in CA was designated in 2012.

Friends Groups, Partnerships and volunteer-driven stewardship programs are important to support NLCS. Tourism dollars help communities. A study showed how GSENM supports economy in neighboring counties.

200 scientific research projects ongoing on NLCS lands. Paleo research in GSENM.

Goals...conserve landscapes, expand partnerships, youth outreach and scientific research.

Virgin River only Wild and Scenic river in state. 19 miles of tributaries. Rob Sweeten is now the lead over the administration for the trails systems.

NLCS 19% lands administered by BLM in UT. Encouraging development of Friends groups.

Operating budget- depend on Friends Groups? The groups do work for BLM- they don't give the agency money.

NLCS is embedded within the BLM agency. Was codified in 2009.

Greater Canyonlands “Monument?” Will a new Monument be created? BLM is providing info like socio-economics and map info. Congressional hearings ask BLM to testify in a public setting for or against the creation. Don’t take a position until that point in the process.

Significance of NLCS. BLM has a collection of “gems” comparable to NPS.

What about access and habitat restoration? Invite RAC to give feedback on the strategy.

MAC meets May 7-8. Deadline for comments will be after that.

Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) Committee’s involvement with NLCS. LCC focuses on a specific region and NLCS manages on a broad landscape level. Ecoregional Assessments (ERAs) will be incorporated. How does BLM define NLCS values? Different groups define values differently. Need to clarify how BLM defines:

- Conservation
- Preservation
- Restoration

Is NLCS management scheme different from BLM’s overall approach? Would help to clarify.

Please send comments to Bunny or Sherry ([bsterin@blm.gov](mailto:bsterin@blm.gov) or [sfoot@blm.gov](mailto:sfoot@blm.gov)). No formal document exists, but we can create a pdf and send it out.

Juan- 2 options:

- 1) Email Bunny or
- 2) the RAC provide official comments on letterhead to BLM

Chair suggested that the RAC hold a special meeting to evaluate NLCS strategy and provide comments.

The document is not public yet. Will be after the RAC and MAC review and comment. Discussion about whether it should be made public first? Or should it be simultaneous? Juan asked Bunny’s recommendation. Request RAC’s comments first before public sees it. Jim Allison suggested that RAC shape the document that the public responds to.

BLM LUPs won’t change.

Chair (Lowell B)- think about this overnight and make a motion tomorrow regarding comments on NLCS strategy.

### **RAC’s Involvement with the Utah Film Commission**

BLM Utah’s permitting system and the Utah Film Commission

Juan

90 types of film permits ongoing in UT. Studio films bring a lot of money to UT.

Must do NEPA on some of this work. Bring in lots of people, heavy equipment and construction.

After permit is over, must restore land. Use landscapes, rivers, etc.

Juan provided a hand-out of how many filming permits per year in UT. Shows which FOs have the most permits. Moab has the most. Next is SLC. All FOs are involved to some degree. Range in complication factor from commercials (still photos) to major studio films.

Problem: Lone Ranger movie caused problems, miscommunications. Brought to light the limitations of permits. Disney does not want to return to UT. Visited with Utah Film Commission about how to improve communication. We want studios to film in UT.

Current IM on how to do film permitting in UT was passed around. RAC can provide an official response as to how to improve the IM. Needs the perspective of the public. Juan can't take it to the Film Commission for feedback- violation of FACA. Requested RAC to review and comment. Staff needs training. Can we train BLM and film employees together? Hard to anticipate every possible scenario. Need to be flexible and proactive. Tiered level of NEPA analysis.

Juan requested that RAC think about commenting on IM. Overall goal is to get film companies to return to UT.

John Harja can talk to Film Commission, which is a State agency.

Chair (Lowell B)- suggested that RAC will approve/disapprove 12-page IM review tomorrow at the end of the meeting.

## **February 22**

Motion to establish subcommittee to launch review of 3-year NLCS strategy. John made motion, Bill Hopkin and JR Nelson 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Motion to review film permit IM: Add to next RAC agenda to include UT film commission's input. Carl made motion. Porter 2<sup>nd</sup>

Juan offered (3) suggestions- John take the IM to film committee; RAC review and comment; RAC does not want to review and comment given workload.

Chair (Lowell B)- would be useful to have input from film commission. Put on the agenda for next RAC meeting.

## **RACs Responsibilities Under REA**

Powerpoint presentation

Aaron Curtis/Cory Roegner

Aaron introduced Joanna Wilson from the FS Intermountain Region and Cory as new rec lead.

UT is 3<sup>rd</sup> most visited state for tourists. \$2.8M in rec fee revenues.

Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) effective through 2014. Reinvest fees back to sites from where they were collected. Interpretation, signage, visitor services.

REA establishes the Recreation RAC and interagency “America the Beautiful” pass. Free Veteran’s pass.

Fees may only be established when six objectives are met. Three types of fees.

Standard- day use, interpretation centers, toilets, parking

Expanded amenity fees- boat launches, overnight group sites, transportation services, campfire devices, toilets, picnic tables

Special Recreation Permits (SRPs): resource protection concerns, public safety. BLM has 7 areas and FS permits Christmas tree cutting and OHV recreationists using these permits.

BLM retains rec fees to support rec sites. Doesn’t go into Treasury. Should mount a better PR effort to show public that their fees are going back into the site. Does support salaries for on-the-ground labor and Law Enforcement.

How to establish fee rates? Rating system on amenities conditions, etc.

REA dollars- how money must be used. Funds cannot be used on non-fee sites.

What changes would agencies like to see? Is hard to get Rec RACs together. Different states have different issues. BLM has developed issue papers for BLM input nationwide. Aaron will get that info out to the RAC. UT has one of the best Rec RACs in the country. Other states have struggled, so bear that in mind when reviewing.

Public has opportunity to comment when agencies establish new fees or change existing fees. Notify through social media, TV, and notifications posted at the sites.

*Federal Register* Notices for new fees 6 mos. ahead of proposed implementation. Plans are well-scrutinized.

RAC duties: establish or eliminate fees, modify existing fees, or expand or limit rec fee programs.

Recommendations may be made if public involvement is well documented. RACs can’t make recommendations concerning permitted organized group/competitive activities or sites operated by contractors or concessionaires.

## **Proposals for Fee Increases**

BLM- Boating on San Juan River,  
Monticello FO  
BLM-Red Cliffs NCA, NCA Manager  
FS-Seely Guard Station, Manti-La Sal NF

Bill Hopkin (Vice Chair) resumed as Chair. Lowell stepped out for a meeting.

Todd Parker- Rec Lead Monticello FO. **San Juan River SRP fee proposal**. Provided a powerpoint and chart of river fees.

Business mgmt. plan for San Juan River SRP fee is completed.

Clay Hills- Montezuma Creek is about a week-long river trip. Protect natural and cultural resources values. Interagency/tribal (Navajo) effort. Joint agreement w/NPS but not tribe.

Facilities are available at river access sites. Clay Hills is meandering because it is silting in from Lake Powell. That facility needs improved. Needs to partner with NPS to improve that area.

Volunteer program assists staffing.

Special areas are designated by BLM Utah planning process, not Congress.

San Juan (SJ) segment is suitable and being considered for W&S river designation.

All San Juan river users pay an SRP fee. Outfitters pay 3% of adjusted gross. Without REA we couldn't charge fees at all.

Fee proposal--Increase fees for upper/lower San Juan and combined. Plus a \$6 application fee.

Propose to shorten lottery season to reflect demand.

Application fee is non-refundable, expires at the end of the year. Even if the applicant does not succeed in the lottery, does not get fee back. Goes toward admin costs.

11 commercial permittees on SJ. 40% commercial and 60% private actual use. Number of launches and people are monitored. Why are there limits? Preserve quality of experience. Limited number of camps. Don't want people creating new sites. Based on availability.

Expect a drop in applications by implementing fee, but anticipate \$22.5k additional revenue. Might not lose 25% if start a point system similar to hunting.

Discussion--ledger showing fee structure/cost collections and balances; and fee site revenues from commercial and public users.

Fee increase will help meet annual costs and conduct cultural inventories/mitigate impacts. BLM will be able to hire project specific staff for planning and implementation. Will use some

appropriated funding from cultural program to support inventories and conservation/protection measures.

Applications are per trip leader/annual -- NOT per participant on the trip.

Almost 3700 applicants per year.

Improve volunteer program by providing housing? Eventually, the current shared housing for volunteers would be replaced with smaller, more energy efficient, individual units to attract and retain volunteers who desire more privacy. Currently, a majority of our volunteers are retired and have indicated that they prefer more private housing arrangements. This has been an ongoing recruiting challenge for our program that we want to address in the future as funding allows.

Showed comparable fees: SJ will become in alignment with other agencies.

Socioeconomic impact: two rafts for (8) people/2 days (cheapest trip): estimated costs for private SJ trip costs about \$348. Fee proposal will add a 10% cost increase.

Business mgmt. plan is on BLM website/ local and regional/Associated Press papers picked up the story. Comment period closed Jan. 25.

50 comments were rec'd. 17 +, 18 -, 15 mixed.

In support of proposal: online method of paying fees was acceptable; willing to pay for amenities and environmental protection. Do a river mgmt. plan.

In opposition: exclude lower income families; commercial outfitters should pay more.

In conclusion: request a response from RAC regarding SJ river fee increase?

Close to cost recovery. This is as close as we'll get as far as self-sustaining rec site. Would need to hire temporary staff to plan and implement mitigation efforts. Made some gains through one-time funding (Russian Olive removal).

Daily fee as opposed to a standard fee? Pay more for 7-Day vs a 2-Day? Makes sense, hard to monitor.

Economy affects rec use. If Navajo reservoir doesn't release more than 500 cubic feet/second, boaters won't use it. Climate determines what's "floatable."

Are people getting their "bang for the buck" if fee increases? Has there been 66% improvement since 2001? Planning and mgmt. benefits are not immediately obvious to public. Example- exotic species removal. Frequent visitors would see a diff.

Falls under Monticello RMP. Doesn't have a separate mgmt. plan.



Navaho Nation involvement? Employees join BLM on patrols, but not much of a coordinated effort w upper mgmt. Diff fees depending on which side of the river you camp on.

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Dawna provided a .ppt. about the **Red Cliffs Rec Area.**

Rec boundaries aren't working because of Desert Tortoise and wilderness areas. Have a small campground in place with a number of amenities. Visitor services handled by interns and volunteers.

38k visitors in 2012. Peak visitation areas Feb-Jun, Sep-Oct. Year-round use.

Can't expand campground (12 camping spots) or parking because of designated critical habitat surrounding.

Rec fees established in 1997, unchanged since. Need about \$90k for recovery costs.

Proposing fair market value for fee increases? Meet all of the REA requirements for the area. Including standard and expanded fees for partial cost recovery. Also, adjacent boundaries of area to exclude Cottonwood Canyon wilderness and include White Reef park facilities. Establish a new fee site. Next step is a *FR* notice.

Need to cover operating costs, contracted services (janitorial, arborists, etc.), equipment, materials and supplies, improve visitor services.

CPI has gone up 34% since 1997. Current fees only cover 77% of expenses. Would like to build an emergency expense fund.

Have never paid labor from fee revenues.

Showed chart of site comparison. Proposed fees would be in line with surrounding sites. Would be nice to have credit card machines since visitors don't carry cash.

America the Beautiful passes are accepted. An annual pass has been discussed.

Showed new boundaries that are being proposed to include developed, fenced facilities in White Reef area. Exclude wilderness that public can't access.

County Commissioners involved in initial planning. County bought out grazing permits in 1996. No active allotments in Red Cliffs. Recommended mgmt. for Desert Tortoises – no livestock grazing.

Struggling for money. Cattle ranchers used to paying to graze, now county pays to bring in goats?

White Reef Park has extensive amenities, including Adams House, Trail Steward Program and connected trails. Equestrian use, Hollywood movie set should be a part of the area. Meets standard amenity fees for REA. Proposed new fee site.

Business plan comment period Jan 10-Feb. 8. Posted notifications at sites, social media releases.

14 comments. 6 +, 5-, 3 no opinion.

Western Slope “No Fee” Coalition/Aaron. Special interest group out of CO. They scrutinize all agency fee proposals nationally. BLM implements national policy; focus comment responses on individual proposals. Coalition does not think public land should charge fees. Thought BLM was minimalist on public outreach. BLM is NOT trying to hide proposals from public. We’re doing a great job of getting the word out. Comment period over the holidays- January is the most heavily trafficked month. As much participation as possible is the goal.

Comments are incorporated into business plans to clarify facts and make minor edits. Adapting documents in response to public comments. BLM is not ignoring Coalition. Their feedback improves quality of proposals, but BLM must adhere to national policy.

Washington County and other places with low income or minority populations- increased fee will impact low income people. Barrier to including minorities to enjoy public land. Provide free fee days?

No members of the public were here to comment.

### **FS-Seely Guard Station, Manti-La Sal NF**

Anne King

Provided a powerpoint.

Located on Wasatch Plateau. 11k ft. elevation. Cabin intersects Ephraim Canyon and Skyline roads.

Improved the amenities. 5-8 person capacity. Operates year-round. Snowmobilers, hunters and snowshoers. Equestrian facilities. Firewood is provided so people don’t go collect their own.

Passport In Time (PIT) volunteers help restore cabin annually. Fully restored barn and fixed fence.

All of these features put FS on par with two other cabins (guard stations) that charge fees. \$30-50.

Public involvement- notices posted onsite and media. Notified public officials at public lands meetings. These meetings are very well attended.

Two comments. 1+, 1 maybe. Would pay \$40 but not \$50.

\$60-70k worth of improvements has been put into maintenance of the building.

Recreation.gov- make a reservation online.

Cost recovery? Even with \$50/night, FS still pays to travel to site and conduct monitoring activities. Eligible for National Register of Historic Places. Much support from Emery County to help restore.

Supposed to be self-cleaning, but FS always has to check between visits weather depending. No security deposits. Guests have been taking good care of the place. 95% of revenue goes back to improving the cabin.

Bill Hopkin: vote now. Sherry provided an email from the public to present to the RAC. Gave everyone a copy of the email to read over lunch and vote afterward. Suggested vote before lunch because two members will be late.

Steve Burr made motion to accept three fee proposals as presented? Rick 2<sup>nd</sup> to accept fee proposals as presented. Unanimous - aye.

RAC doesn't have to recommend boundary change for Red Cliffs.

Aaron- comments in email were substantive but addressed in the presentations.

**St. George/Cedar City RMP Updates**  
Planning updates

Todd/Jimmy/Elizabeth

Jimmy Tyree- (hand-outs associated with this presentation).

Grazing and development was limited for Desert Tortoise habitat. FWS key partner. There were several land exchanges involved, buying out private property. Still working on an additional 1300-1400 acres to buy out.

Draft RMP/DEIS out this fall.

Two main issues: evaluate potential 45 ACECs and modify OHV area designations.

Comprehensive Trails and Travel Management plan – involves a lengthy planning process.

How much time goes into the planning process? The public doesn't understand how intensely complicated it is. It is a tremendous effort with limited staff. Involve consultants, but experienced staff must do heavy lifting. Is a F/T workload in addition to normal workload. Plans take 6-7 years to get done; Congress gave SGFO 3 years for two plans. Need to have that much time to think through all of the alternatives and conduct research.

Trying to do it right, even though we're up against the clock.

Elizabeth Burghard, FM CCFO- efficiencies gained throughout process.

(See hand-outs – made available upon request)

CCFO Plan: Beaver and Iron counties - 2.1M acres.

Existing plans are dated (30 years old). Key issues: no Travel Mgmt plan even though 97% of FO is open to cross country travel, no ACECs, never evaluated for Wild and Scenic (W&S) rivers.

Examples of land uses: OHV rec, mining, grazing, energy. World-class rock crawling areas and interest in OHV use in general.

Resource values- balance with range and riparian, numerous and significant cultural sites, 3 T&E UT Prairie Dog, Mexican spotted owl, and Bonneville Cutthroat trout, 10 Herd Management Areas - 600T acres of BLM.

Special designations: how to manage intense resource use. Old Spanish Trail. 14 miles of W&S rivers, Sage grouse. Discussions- we know how to manage it but what to call it? Overlapping ops. Criteria for ACEC or SRMAs.

DEIS available in Jan. 2014 – 90-day comment period- analysis- Jan 2015, DRMP- protest and governor's consistency review- ROD Summer 2015.

Good county involvement.

RMP frustration- lack of examining economics? Economic workshops initiated in 2005. Rec, Agriculture, and Mineral operations figure into this. The socioeconomics report is on the website.

A zoned socio-economist has been hired at UTSO for UT, NV, and ID. This is a scarce skill in the Bureau--Julie Pierce

Economic studies would back up claims of commodity production from public land.

Two planning efforts underway in UT. Western side of state remains: FFO and SLFO.

Will swap up schedule to address NLCS issue. Jim Allison will take the lead. Timeline? Get comments in before it goes public and put it on the schedule of the next RAC meeting. Jim: doesn't like document, would like to find ways to constructively suggest improvements. April-subcommittee mtg. Subcommittee members: Porter, JR, John, Rick, Bill, Steve Burr and Steve Slater (Bill made motion to elect Jim Allison as Chairman of subcommittee; Jr seconded)

Changing wording or intent? Not rewriting document, but there's no strategy. Just a list of things that would be good to do. Seems like a document-by-committee with no priorities. Don't

understand BLM's intent. Point out weaknesses and get comments from subcommittee and strengthen/clarify doc that goes out to the public.

BLM will listen to RAC's suggestions.

Lots of great words: continue, develop, implement—what about performance measures? Don't see a strategy.

When is next meeting? Subcommittee should have a deliverable available at next RAC mtg. What does Juan want? Suggested Moab, May. Task? What is question we're trying to answer? The document should guide us.

*FR* notice for subcommittee? 30 days in advance of meeting. Info-gathering only, do not have to announce. If making recommendations, yes, there has to be a *FRN*.

Jim prefers that subcommittee send him comments in March because his schedule (conf. in April).

Announce in *FR* immediately, meet in April and provide deliverable in May. OR in March, fact find and have a meeting in April.

Ray Bloxham- public meetings capture input better, and better represents the group's interpretation. If there were disagreements, those were documented.

#### State Director's Public Land Partner and Outgoing RAC Member Awards Presentation

Invited guests to attend

#### Schedule Next Meeting Date/Location

Sherry/Lowell

Possible topics to be discussed

Subgroup Meeting to possibly take place in April. Focus - NLCS Draft Strategy document

Possible RAC meeting dates: May 16-17, 2013; Field Tour - Little Sahara Recreation Area (focus – infrastructure, Law Enforcement issues, campgrounds, roads, visitor safety). Business meeting focus – NLCS subgroup report, OHV recreation, Film Commission guest speaker (ref the BLM's IM), Sage grouse (State's plan updates), BLM Grazing issues (permitting, NEPA documentation, non-renewable issues)

Adjourn meeting at 4:00.

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_/s/ Lowell Braxton\_\_\_\_\_  
Lowell Braxton, RAC Chairman

Dated:

\_\_\_\_\_March 8, 2013\_\_\_\_\_